

# **NACBS/British Council Canadian Undergraduate Essay Contest in British Studies**

## **Annual Report**

**Robert Tittler, Chair**

**12 September, 2003**

I divide this report into three parts: (a) Funding from British Council; (b) the Structure and Membership of the Committee; (c) this year's Contest and Results.

### **A. Funding.**

The initial agreement between British Council (Canada) and NACBS which allowed us to launch the contest in the late summer of 2001 was that British Council would provide \$Can 1000 (= \$US 700) annually for a two year period, which would serve to award ten prizes @ \$Can 100 each year. In addition, British Council undertook to seek corporate funding which would support the contest annually and on the same terms after the initial two year period. For our part, Linda Peck, then President of NACBS, consented to underwrite costs of printing and postage, which amounted to about \$Can 240 (= \$US 170) per annum.

During this last academic year it became obvious that British Council had not succeeded in finding an alternative sponsorship in the private sector. Mr. Peter Chenery, Head of British Council, Canada, then graciously agreed to fund the contest at the same level as before for two additional years (2003-04 and 2004-05) while the search for corporate funding continued.

NACBS continues to underwrite the overhead costs of postage and printing.

### **B. Membership and Structure of the Committee:**

Since the inception of the Contest two years ago the Committee has consisted of myself as Chair, Deborah Gorham, Prof. Emerita of History at Carleton University in Ottawa, and Lynn Wells, Assistant Professor of English at the University of Regina. Debbie and I had carried out the initial negotiations with British Council to launch the contest. The Three of us cover a usefully wide range of subject areas and chronological periods. Debbie works in 20th century History and Biography; I work in 16-17th Century English (political, local, urban, biographical, art and architectural) History. With Lynn Wells's expertise in Modern British literature, and both Debbie and Lynn's active expertise in feminist issues, it seems fair to say that we covered the range of time periods and subject areas pretty well. In addition, each of us works in a different province, allowing us some useful geographic breadth as well.

The NACBS Council meeting held in Baltimore last year produced a request that we formalize the committee's structure and create a *cursus honorum* for its membership. We now propose that membership should be for three years, with each member chairing the committee in his or her

third year. Since we felt we had a better grasp of personnel in Canada than the NACBS Council at large, we have at least this year deliberated amongst ourselves to propose the succession to the Chairmanship and the addition of one new member. I would suggest that this is a useful and effective precedent.

We would propose these arrangements to the NACBS Council for ratification. I have agreed to step off the committee on the conclusion of business depending from the 2002-2003 contest. Deborah Gorham has agreed to succeed as Chair. Jim Alsop, Professor of History at McMaster University, has agreed to replace me as the new member. Jim also works chiefly in the 16-17th century, and has done financial, political, maritime and medical history. Though I have made Martin Wiener, President of NACBS, aware of these intentions, and though Jim and Debbie will need to begin their new duties virtually at once in order to launch the contest for the current year, this, too, requires ratification.

#### C. The Contest and Results for 2002-2003.

A somewhat more rigorous nomination process employed this year brought in a slightly smaller batch of contestants, but seems to have pushed the overall quality of the submissions to an even higher level than last year. Several submissions seemed to me to be of virtually publishable quality.

A total of 27 finalists came from seventeen different colleges and universities (Alberta, Brock, Calgary, Concordia, Dalhousie, Glendon College of York University, Manitoba, McGill, McMaster, New Brunswick, Regina, Saskatchewan, St Thomas More College, St. Francis Xavier, Victoria (BC), Windsor, and York.) Though most essays were completed in History and English courses, Art History, History of Medicine and Scottish Studies programmes were also represented.

Once again we have presented the ten winners without ranking them; there seemed no point in doing so, since all awards are the same value (Can\$100) and many of them scored very close to each other.

The winners, in alphabetical order, are as follows, with their University, faculty nominator, and essay title.

Eva Ash, (York) Prof. John Bell. 'Vanity Fair, a Novel of Three Genres'.

Susan Dusel, (Regina). Prof. Lynn Wells. 'Romantic Yearnings in a Postmodern Age; Truth, Beauty and (Uncertain) Meaning in Ian McEwan's Amsterdam'.

Domenica Goduto, (Dalhousie). Prof. Cynthia Neville. 'Scottish Identity in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries'.

Laurie Jacklin, (McMaster). Prof. Jim Alsop. 'Englishmen in the East India Company's Factory in Hirado, Japan, 1613-1623'.

Jennifer McDermott, (McGill). Prof. Leanore Lieblin. 'Perceiving Shakespeare: A Study of Sight, Sound and Stage'.

Elizabeth Scott, (Saskatchewan). Prof. Lisa Smith. 'Children's Bodies and Children's Medicine in Early Modern England'.

Tim Smith, (Manitoba). Prof. Greg T. Smith. 'Man of his Own, an Analysis of William Pitt the Younger's Political Influences'.

Nathalie-Nicole Sroka-Filion, (Concordia). Prof. Robert Tittler. 'Origin and Evolution of the Oriel in the Domestic and Religious Architecture of Early Modern England'.

Kirsten Weld, (McGill). Prof. Brian Lewis. "'We Reinvented Culture the Way We Wanted it-With Great Big Shoes', Glam Rock, Glitter, and the Iconography of Gender in 1970s Britain".

Eileen Wennekers, (Calgary) Prof. Ken MacMillan, 'Putting Universal Knowledge to Legitimate Use: the Science of Early Modern English Imperialism, 1580-1620'.

Members of the Contest Committee

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